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OUTDOOR RECREATION ON OUR NATIONAL FORESTS

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

Radio talk by F. V. Horton, Assistant Regional Forester for the North Pacific Region, Forest Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture. Farm and Home Hour, May 7, 1937.

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Millions of Americans have "discovered" their National Forests the past few years and increasing millions will discover them this summer and will find satisfaction and thrills in exploring them, in autos, afoot or horseback.

Glimpses of the trails ahead, mystery and beauty and adventure around each turn and twist through canyon, past waterfall, mountain shoulder or ridge top - the flitting glimpse of shy deer or other denizen of the wild, slipping into cover are only a few of the things that bring these visitors to the forest so that they could return home refreshed mentally, stronger physically, and what is quite important to many of us, with vacation money still jingling in their pockets!

Where are these National Forests? Well, just about everywhere there are mountains or forest lands; 170 million acres of them scattered through 37 States and two territories; lying along the backbone of the Appalachians, in the Lake States, with the largest and wildest acres along the crests of the Rockies, the Cascades and the Sierras.

All of them, lying as they do along the summits of the mountain chains and on the headwaters of our various rivers, embrace the roughest, wildest and most remote lands of the respective portions of the country. Thousands of unknown mountain lakes, rugged snow-capped peaks, flower strewn mountain meadows, sharply cleft rock gorges, vast stretches of virgin forests, tens of thousands of miles of trout fishing streams and the last feeding grounds of many of our American big game and fur-bearing animals, lie within the boundaries of this vast domain of forest lands, which is protected, managed and developed for us by the Forest Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Following the World War came the extension of National and State highways and the great expansion of use of the automobile. "See America First" became a national slogan. Mr. and Mrs. Recreationist, with their great love for the outdoors which is an heritage from our adventurous forefathers, began going farther and farther afield during vacation times. From cross mountain highways they got glimpses of the wild uplands which incited their desire to explore farther and farther into the enchanting wildernesses which stretched, undeveloped and challenging, prechance as far as the eye could see on either side of their highway routes. During this period also, a new concept of recreation had developed in America. Whereas a hundred years ago recreation was a sin and work was the great God of our bustling country, millions now believe that every man, woman and child has an inalienable right to play - to re-create body and mind, preferably out of doors in health building air and sunshine. From a small beginning but a few short years ago, the recreation use of the National Forests has increased until millions of our people now visit

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them annually, many of them again and again during the summer months. They come afoot. They come in autos. They come on horseback. They come in airplanes. They explore the most remote and inaccessible spots in our mountain chains. Twenty-four million people enjoyed National Forest campgrounds, fishing and hunting areas, roads and trails last year. Thirty million are expected this coming season yet the forests will not be crowded.

Maximum practicable freedom of individual action is permitted in the National Forests. Simple, informal, unregimented types of recreation are enjoyed by young and old. Nowadays, the use of many of the Forest areas is yearlong. Camping, picnicking, swimming, boating, hiking, riding, fishing, hunting, nature studies, are enjoyed in summer, and winter sports are enjoyed during the snowy months.

Freedom and adventure await the more hardy types of recreationists who prefer to rough it. Great primitive areas, wherein no use or development which will destroy the primitive character of the areas is permitted, have been set aside in the western forests. Pack horse parties are conducted on trips through the primitive areas by dude ranchers and others. Many people prefer the simpler and less expensive method of picking up their bed and walking. With simple but complete outfits in their knapsacks, they wander over the great mountain forest lands, tasting the joys of exploration and adventure which have been denied most people of this gasoline age.

Concentrated human use on any forest land is destructive to trees, shrubs, and soil. The sharply rising tide of recreational use on the National Forests has made it necessary to plan and develop the more heavily used areas with simple facilities. Camp fireplaces, tables, benches, pure water systems, and sanitation facilities have been provided upon over 6,000 campground and picnic areas within the National Forests. All facilities are of simple, appropriate rustic types which fit into the forest surroundings. Trained landscape architects are planning and supervising these developments in ways which will permit the greatest amount of individual freedom of use and still protect the natural woodland charm which is the basic attraction. This important use of the National Forests is coordinated with the harvesting of timber and forage crops, and the protection of watersheds, wild life, and scenic beauty, in such a manner that all of the resources may be enjoyed without destruction by this generation and the generations yet to come.

In many places where special services are essential, resorts, cabin camps and other special services are furnished at nominal prices. These concessions are operated under permit and regulations established by the U. S. Forest Service.

There is a Forest Supervisor's office near each National Forest. You can get detailed information about any particular area by talking or writing to him. When you are on the forests, the District Ranger or any one of his force of summer fire guards or campground caretakers will be glad to advise you on any matter having to do with your vacation.

Every one is welcome in these National Forest campgrounds and recreation areas, but remember others will follow you - give them a break too -- be sure your campfires and smokes are put out and keep the campgrounds clean.

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